

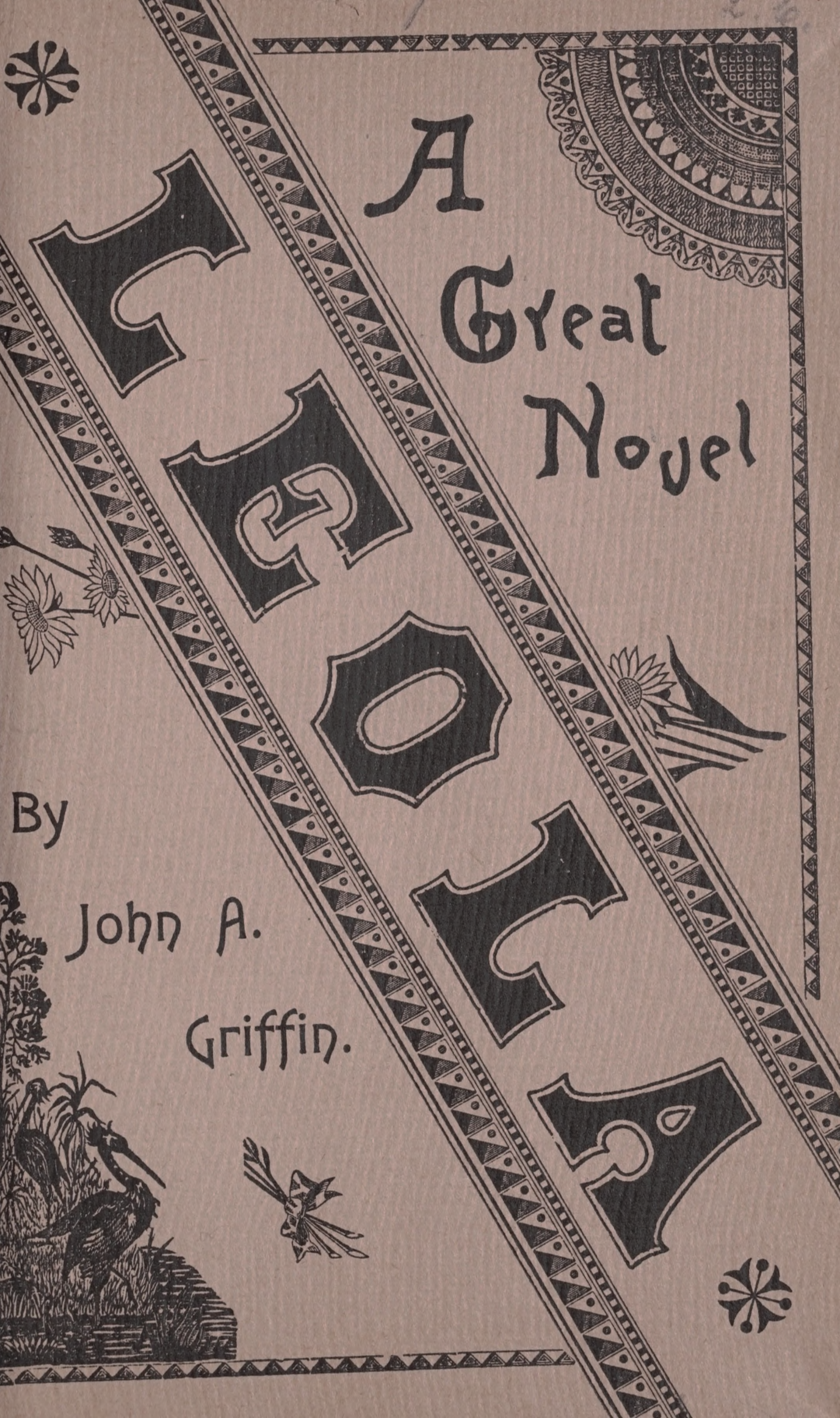
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By

John A.

Griffin.



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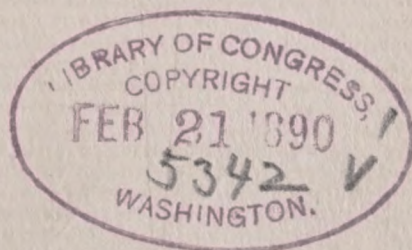


LEOLA.

—BY—

JOHN A. GRIFFIN,

TROY, N. Y.



PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE.
The Ruined Earl,	11-18

CHAPTER II.

The Lawyer's Proposition,	19-28
-------------------------------------	-------

CHAPTER III.

Leola,	29-31
------------------	-------

CHAPTER IV.

Lady Rose Voilaine,	32-37
-------------------------------	-------

CHAPTER V.

Leola's Marriage,	38-41
-----------------------------	-------

CHAPTER VI.

The Duke of Montrose,	42-47
---------------------------------	-------

CHAPTER VII.

Their Tour in Italy and America,	48-53
--	-------

CHAPTER VIII.

Lord Harry Ray,	54-60
---------------------------	-------

CHAPTER IX.

The Duel, 61-64

CHAPTER X.

Remorse, 65-71

CHAPTER XI.

His Wife, 72-77

CHAPTER XII.

The Ball, 78-88

CHAPTER XIII.

Lady Voilaine's Repentance, . . . 89-91

CHAPTER XIV.

All is Well that Ends Well, . . . 92-100

CHAPTER I.

THE RUINED EARL.

“I LAUGH at fate, or the notion of anything like it,” said Vane St. Claire.

“I believe in it, and I tremble to hear you scoff at its power,” said Hugh Gaynor, a young solicitor, as he sat in his office in the busy city of London, talking to his friend, Vane St. Claire.

“You believe in it? What is it? Where is the logic of such a belief?”

“I can scarcely answer your questions fully. Fate is circumstance—circumstance is fate. The logic in it—you ask for that? it is the logic of events. It is the very soul of history.”

“What is the soul of history—fate or circumstance?”

“Either—both. They mean the same thing. Little things and great things are too closely connected in this world of ours to make it safe to say that there may not be an invisible thread binding together events which seem remote in time or space. Do you hear that step on the pavement outside? Among the

thousands of persons in our great city, the one who passes now is doubtless a man you have never seen. He is probably a man you never will see. You know not his name, nor he yours. He is almost passed. He has been so near that a shout would have made him pause. A cry for help would have brought him to us. The restless tide of life of our great city will swallow him up in a few seconds." At that moment the door of the room opened, and the lawyer's clerk announced,

"Lord Lyde, sir."

"I am ready to see him," was the reply. "Good day, Gaynor, we will finish our argument on fate some other time," Vane replied as he departed.

"Am I too soon?" asked a loud, clear voice.

Hugh Gaynor looked up with a smile at the speaker.

"No, my lord; I was expecting you."

The clerk placed a chair, and at a signal from his master quitted the room.

But Lord Lyde declined the proffered seat. He stood by the chair leaning with careless grace upon it.

"I suppose," he said, "that I should furnish

an excellent warning as a lesson for all bad boys."

"You would, my lord," was the grave reply.

Hugh Gaynor looked at the speaker. There was something of admiration, of pity, and of contempt, in the long, lingering glance of those shrewd eyes ; yet he could not have looked at a handsomer face or figure than that of Lord Lyde.

Handsome, with a haggard kind of beauty that told its own story—that told of days and nights spent in wild dissipation—told of prodigal habits, told of an idle, purposeless life, of a nature spoiled and vitiated. The head was well shaped and proudly set ; it was covered with clusters of dark hair, waving in lines of perfect beauty from a broad, white brow. The face itself was clearly cut, with handsome features, dark blue eyes, straight brows. The figure was tall, well knit, finely formed.

The Earl of Lyde, as he stood awaiting his sentence, was a handsome and comely Englishman, retaining much of his former strength and vigor, although he had done his best to destroy them.

There was no trembling in his manner, no

hesitation. His easy grace and nonchalance did not desert him even while he listened to words that must sound terrible to him.

“Now, Mr. Gaynor,” he said at last with haughty impatience, “there is no need to keep the ax suspended over my head ; tell me the worst at once.”

“The worst, my lord, is utter ruin—ruin so complete that I do not see a chance of saving one shilling from the wreck.”

The Earl listened quite calmly; his lips grew a trifle paler—but there was no flinching in the noble, handsome, haggard face.

“Utter ruin,” he repeated.

“True, my lord,” assented the lawyer.

“You see no loop—you can suggest nothing?”

“Every loophole is closed, my lord,” was the brief reply.

“And you are sure, Gaynor, that there is nothing left on which I can borrow money—nothing more that I can mortgage?”

“Quite sure, my lord.”

“Tell me, Gaynor, how I stand.”

Hugh Gaynor, the calm, shrewd, inscrutable man of business, looked at the Earl—perhaps he wondered at his perfect calmness. Then he

glanced at the sheet of paper lying on his desk.

“It will not be pleasant to hear, Lord Lyde,” he said slowly, “but you ask for it. To begin: At the age of forty-five, after your father’s death, you succeeded to the Lydewood estates and title; the estates were clear of all debts and incumbrances; the rent-roll was fifty thousand per annum; there was besides a sum of sixty thousand pounds in the funds, the savings of the late Earl—that is correct, I believe?”

“Quite so,” was the reply.

“You are now fifty-seven years of age, my lord, and in twelve years you have run through a fine fortune.”

“Keep to facts, no comments,” said the Earl.

“The sixty thousand went to pay your losses on the race track the first year. After that you continually forestalled your income by borrowing money; then your losses on the turf and gaming-table were so great that you were compelled to raise a heavy mortgage on the estate; then you borrowed money on the pictures, the plate and furniture at Lydewood. In fact, my lord, briefly told, your situation is

this—you are hopelessly, helplessly ruined. You owe seventy thousand pounds mortgage money and fifty thousand pounds borrowed money—and you have nothing to pay it with. You received notice from me five months since that the mortgage money was called in. Unless it is paid in two weeks from now, the estate—Lydeewood Castle with all its belongings—passes from you ; it will be seized with all it contains.”

“Then unless I pay the seventy thousand pounds in two weeks, Lydeewood becomes the property of the man who lent the money?”

“Just so,” replied Hugh Gaynor.

“Then I hope he will live to enjoy it, for I have not seventy pounds to pay it with.”

“Hush,” he continued, seeing that the lawyer was about to speak—“no comments! I am a ruined man, as you say ; but I will not submit to criticism. It is all over now, and I have the price of my folly to pay.”

“May I ask what you think of doing?”

“My lord, you may ask—I know no answer, if it were not for my daughter, Leola, who is dying, and who has no one to provide for her when I am gone, I would not care what would become of me ; in two weeks I lose Lyde-

wood, and with it all source of income, and besides that, I am fifty thousand pounds in debt. It seems to me there is but one thing to be done."

Hugh Gaynor looked up anxiously; "What is that," he asked. "I had better invest the trifle I have remaining in the purchase of a revolver—you can imagine for what purpose; it will be but a fit ending to such a career as mine. What comments the newspapers will make upon me! They will head their paragraph, 'Suicide of a Spendthrift Earl'—they will draw excellent morals from my fate; it will not be a noble ending for the last of the Lydes."

"It will not indeed," said Hugh Gaynor.

"There is nothing for it but the revolver. I cannot beg, I cannot work, Leola is dying by inches, she cannot hold out much longer. Yes, Gaynor, I will live until I place my child beside her mother, then I will come and say good bye to you forever."

He spoke calmly, as though he was arranging some plan of travel. Hugh Gaynor looked admiringly at him. "How this blue blood tells," thought the lawyer. "Some men would have cried and have asked for pity and for

time. He faces ruin as much as his ancestors faced death on the battle field."

Then seeing the Earl's eyes fixed on him, he said: "It is a sorry ending, my lord."

"Yes, a sorry ending for the last of the Lydes. There is nothing for it Gaynor but the revolver. I have lived like a king. I have spent royally—I have given royally, too; but that does not matter. I have done good as I believed; I have gambled and betted; I have poured out wealth like water under my feet. Now it is over; it has been a short life, but a merry one. I could not count shillings and pounds; I loath the name and thought of poverty; as I lived, so I must die. I deserve no better fate."

CHAPTER II.

THE LAWYER'S PROPOSITION.

HUGH GAYNOR looked at the calm, handsome face. "You do not seriously mean that you will take your own life, my lord?" he interrogated.

"It seems the only thing left for me to do," replied the Earl.

"Will you listen to me, Lord Lyde—listen in patience? I have something to say."

The lawyer was so earnest, so intent that he carried the other's weaker will with him.

"Before telling you anything further, my lord, I need to remind you, that since my father's death, and since I have had charge of your legal affairs, I have been a good friend to you. The honor of your name is as dear to me as to you."

"Very well! Very well!"

"Do not forget that your duty to your daughter requires a little sacrifice on your part, and if you are willing to make this sacrifice, I can save your name, and your fortune, and I pledge myself to do it, provided you furnish me the means."

“The devil! it is for you to furnish them to me. You speak in riddles.

To the point, Gaynor, to the point.”

“I have come to it. Have you ever met the Duke of Montrose in London?”

“The one with white horses?”

“Precisely.”

“The finest team in London.”

“Norbert, Duke of Montrose, is the last scion of a noble English family. His fortune is the largest in the whole of England; he is thirty-four years of age, and has a handsome face, a finished education, an honorable character—”

“And also a mistress, Lady Rose Voilaine,” interrogated Lord Lyde.

“Since you know that, you shorten the way for me. For reasons which would be too long to relate, the Duke wishes to marry according to his rank into one of the most illustrious families of England. He cares so little for fortune, that he will secure to his father-in-law an income of sixty thousand pounds. The father-in-law whom he wishes is yourself. He has charged me to sound your inclinations; if you say yes, he will go to you to-day to ask the hand of your daughter in marriage, and

the ceremony will be performed in ten days."

This time Lord Lyde took a step or two nearer and stared the lawyer full in the face.

"You are not insane?" he cried; "you are not mocking me? You cannot forget that I am the Earl of Lydewood and nearly double your age? Is this really true that you have told me?"

"The precise truth."

"But he does not know, then, Leola is ill?"

"He knows it."

"Dying?"

"He knows it."

"Given over?"

"He knows it."

A cloud passed over the features of the Earl. He seated himself for the first time since he entered the lawyer's office, leaned his elbows on his knees, and buried his face in his hands.

"This is unnatural," resumed he; "you have not told me all. The Duke of Montrose must have some secret motive for asking the hand of a corpse."

"It is true," returned the lawyer. "It is a long story to relate. You have seen Lady Voilaine. She is a beautiful woman. When she arrived in London first she raised such a

dust in the park that you would have said that the queen of hearts had just landed in London. In less than a year she had made people talk of her horses, her dresses and her furniture, while no one could pronounce positively concerning her conduct."

"Have we come to the point now?" demanded the Earl.

"A moment's patience. Lady Voilaine had singled out Montrose for some time. She occupied the next box to him at the theatre, and she glanced at him with such eyes that he soon procured an introduction to her house.

"Everyone will tell you her drawing-room is one of the most agreeable in London. The duke fell passionately in love with her through the same spirit of emulation that had destroyed so many before him; he adored her the more blindly that she had a husband, and seemed to yield to an irresistible penchant which threw her into his arms. The most intelligent man suffers himself to be taken by such bait, and there is no scepticism that can hold out against the semblance of real love. Montrose is not an inexperienced youth; if he had divined an interested motive he would have put himself on his guard, but the cunning actress pushed

artifice even to heroism. She exhausted her treasury and expended her last dollar in making the duke believe that she loved him, for himself alone. She even exposed her reputation, of which she had taken so much care, and she would have been foolishly compromised if good care had not been taken.

“The Duchess, dowager of Montrose, a devout woman in her old age and dignity, was acquainted with the amours of her son, and found no fault with them. She liked better to see him attached to a woman of the world than lost in those dangerous pleasures in which one ruins and degrades himself.

“The delicacy of Lady Voilaine was so sensitive that Montrose could never succeed in giving her a trifle. The first thing that she accepted was a check for twenty thousand pounds. She was then pregnant with a son, who was born in the following September. Now, Lord Lyde, we are at the heart of the question.

“The accouchment of Lady Voilaine took place in Dorminister. Montrose, believing that everything was permitted to persons of his condition, wished to acknowledge the child at once. The eldest son of the family of Mon-

trose takes the title. I explained to him the legal axiom, and proved to him that his son could not take his name. Lady Voilaine explained that her husband would certainly kill her if she attempted to impose on him this legal paternity. In short, Doctor Carlton registered the infant at the Mayoralty under the name of Conrad, born of unknown parents. The duke shared the knowledge of this event with the venerable duchess. She wished to see the child, ordered it brought to her, and has brought it up herself in her palace in Grosvenor Square.

“He is now three years old ; he grows finely. The duke worships his son ; he cannot endure to see in him a nameless child, and, what is worse, an adulterine. Lady Voilaine would be a woman to remove mountains to secure to her heir the name and the fortune of Montrose.

“But the one most to be pitied is the poor Dowager. She foresees that the duke will not marry for fear of disinheriting his son, that he will turn his fortune into money to put it in his possession, and that he will sell the family estates, and that of this noble name and these

vast domains nothing will be left at the end of half a century.

“In this extremity Lady Voilaine was inspired with a flash of genius. ‘Marry,’ said she to Montrose; seek a wife from among the first nobility of England, and prevail on her in the marriage contract to recognize your child as her own. By this means Conrad will be your legitimate son, noble on the father’s side and also the mother’s side, and heir to all your possessions.’ ”

“The duke has submitted this project to his mother, who will only be too anxious to approve of it. The noble woman has lost her illusions concerning Lady Voilaine, who had cost Montrose nearly two millions.

“ ‘You need not marry for any length of time, Norbert,’ Lady Voilaine said, ‘Doctor Carlton will find you a wife among his incurable patients.’ The doctor spoke of your daughter to me, and therefore I have broached the subject to you, Lord Lyde. This marriage, strange as it may seem to you at first sight, and giving you as it does, a little grandson who is not of your blood, assures to Miss Leola a prolonged existence and a peaceful end.’ ”

“And it gives me an income of sixty thousand pounds, does it not? Well, my dear lawyer, I thank you; tell the Duke of Montrose that I beg to be excused. My daughter may be to bury, but she is not to sell.”

“Lord Lyde, it is true that it is a bargain that I propose to you, but if I believed it unworthy an honorable man, I should not meddle with it. Observe, Lord Lyde, that the family of Montrose is worthy to be allied to yours. The world will have nothing to say.”

“The Duke of Montrose would suit me exactly under any other circumstances. But I do not want it to be said my daughter had a son three years old on her wedding day!”

“No one will say anything—no one will know anything. No one will say anything; the acknowledgment will be secret—and why should it be spoken of?”

“Are they very complicated, these ceremonies of acknowledgment?”

“There is no ceremony at all. A sentence in the marriage contract and the child is legalized.”

“That is one sentence too many. Let us say no more about it.”

Lord Lyde rose from his chair. The lawyer

grasped his hand. "Observe," said he, "my friend, that whenever one lets a vein of good look escape him, it never returns."

"I understand, Gaynor. In refusing your propositions, I renounce all hope in the future. I condemn myself in perpetuity."

"Accept then, Lord Lyde, and do not challenge adverse fortune, my lord! I bring you ease for yourself, a tranquil and peaceful end for the poor child who is dying. I raise up your house, which is crumbling to dust; I give you a grandson ready made, a magnificent child, who can join your name to that of his father, and all this at what price? In consideration of a sentence of two lines inserted in a marriage contract—yet you repulse me for a dealer in shame and a giver of evil counsels. You condemn yourself and your daughter to death rather than lend your name to a little stranger. You fancy that you would be guilty of high treason against the nobility; but do you not know at what price the nobility has been preserved both in England and elsewhere for the last few centuries? We must admit reasons of state. How many times have names been preserved by a miracle or by address?

"Almost all of them, my dear counsellor; I

could cite a dozen without going out of this street. While the lawyer urged him, Lord Lyde had been firm in his refusal. Now that he stood face to face with bitter, black ruin, shame and disgrace, with ignominy and death; now that the urgent pleadings ceased, he at once began to waver.

“Will you go down with me to Lydewood,” he said. “I will consult with my daughter, and I will abide by her decision.”

“I will accompany you, my lord,” said the lawyer.

CHAPTER III.

LEOLA.

“MY cab is at the door,” continued the Earl.

Without another word they started. Lord Lyde felt more decidedly ashamed of himself than he felt before, now that he had given his consent. It was one thing to be considered the greatest spendthrift of the day and another to purchase his safety by such a marriage as this.

“I cannot do it,” he said to himself more than once. “It will only hasten my daughter’s death, instead of prolonging it.”

The lawyer on the whole was rather surprised when the cab stopped. He had never been to Lydewood Castle before. It was a far more beautiful place than he expected to see. A grand old mansion, surrounded by immense grounds, beautifully laid out. On this beautiful summer morning he saw nothing but beautiful sweet-scented flowers, beautiful lime trees, and the silvery spray of a dozen or more fountains dotted the landscape here and there. As they drove off the beautiful road

to the grand old mansion, Hugh Gaynor thought he never beheld a more beautiful scene.

“Do you know I feel heartily ashamed of myself for bringing you here for such a purpose as this,” said Lord Lyde to the lawyer before getting out of the cab.

Without another word the Earl entered the house, the lawyer following him.

“How is Leola getting on? Tell her I am coming in to speak to her immediately,” said Lord Lyde, addressing her maid.

“She is feeling no better, my lord; no better than when you left this morning.”

Lord Lyde then told the lawyer to make himself as comfortable as possible, that he would not detain him long, and then left the room. He was gone a half hour or more. There was a sound of footsteps. Hugh Gaynor rose hurriedly, the door swung open, and there stood the Earl of Lydewood and his child.

“Here is my daughter,” he said. “She prefers to answer for herself. Leola, this is Mr. Gaynor.”

Leola stood facing the lawyer. Her colorless face was like an effaced page. She was

clothed in white. She indeed resembled one who had arisen from the grave. The bright lustre of her large blue eyes was alone visible. A mass of golden hair clustered about her head, her transparent hands fell by her sides among the folds of her dress, and such was the emaciation of her whole person that she resembled one of those beautiful beings who have neither the beauties or the defects of earthly mortals.

She spoke in a low, clear voice.

“Mr. Gaynor,” she said, “I shall marry the Duke of Montrose and adopt the child of this lady. I thank you for having saved my father. The misconduct of these people will restore to him what he spent so foolishly. As for me, I shall do a good deed by giving a name to this little stranger. I know what I pledge myself in taking his name. But good heavens! what would they say if I should play them the trick of recovering?”

When the conversation was ended the lawyer arose. He bade them adieu and told them he was going to carry the glad tidings to the Duke of Montrose.

“It is likely you will receive a visit from him to-morrow,” he replied.

CHAPTER IV.

LADY ROSE VOILAINE.

LADY ROSE VOILAINE sat in her drawing-room nestled in the depths of her luxurious chair with a novel open on her lap, and her long shining tresses unbound and hanging in a loose, rippled luxuriance, as the hair of a Grecian goddess. No toilet was so becoming as the parisian texture with its profusion of lace about the arms and bosom, that she wore ; no sandals more bewitching than the slipper, embroidered with gold and pearls, into which her small, beautiful shaped foot was encased ; no drawing-room in London could boast of being half as pretty or enticing as her own, with its rose-tendre hanging, its silver swinging lamps, its toilet table shrouded in lace, its superb mirrors, its gemmed vase full of beautiful flowers, its thousand things of luxury and grace. Here perhaps Rose Voilaîne, who had rarest loveliness at all hours, looked her loveliest of all ; and here she sat now thinking, while the gaslight shone on the dazzling whiteness of her skin, on the depths

of her dark eyes, on the shining unbound tresses of her hair ; her thoughts might well be sunny ones. She was in the years of her youth and the height of her beauty.

She had not a caprice she could not carry out, nor a wish she could not gratify. Her world, delirious with her fascination, let her rule it as she would, she was incensed with the bright incense of worship wherever she moved, and gave out life and death with her smile and her frown. From a station of obscurity, when her existence had threatened to pass away, her beauty had lifted her to a dazzling rank, and her tact had taught her to grace it, so that all bowed before her, so that in a thoroughbred, exclusive set she gave the law and made the fashion, and conquests unnumbered strewed her path thick as the falling leaves in autumn.

Lady Voilaine made her first appearance in London some five years before. Society had been a little shy to receive this exquisite creature. Come, none knew whence, born, no one knew where, the fashionable world conceived that Lord Voilaine had made a wretched mesalliance ; Lord Voilaine being a man above reproach as far as blood went.

But the fashionable world in a very short

time gave way before her. She cleared all obstacles, silenced all sneers.

She became the mode. By witchery, by the double right of her own fascination, and the dignity of her lord's name, Lady Voilaine was a power in the world of fashion, and acknowledged leader in her own sphere of pleasure and coquetry. As Lady Voilaine sat, turning over and over the leaves of the book that rested on her lap, she spoke her thoughts half aloud—"He could not resist me if I choose to wind him around my fingers. I should like to break down his pride. He is the first man that has ever crossed me. I would like to bow him down to what he defies me. No man living could defy me—not even—Lord Harry Ray."

It was late, the stars were shining, and the murmur of the waters flowing onward under the elm-woods was heard plaintively and monotonously sweet, as Lady Voilaine, whose whim was every hour changing, and who laughed at all feeling one hour only to assume it most beguilingly, the next, left her drawing-rooms and strolled out for a brief while in the summer night.

The white light of the stars fell about her, glancing on the sapphires and diamonds that

glistened in her hair, or sparkled in her bosom, and shone in the depths of her dark eyes as she raised them and looked upward at the skies above. Presently she was joined by the Duke of Montrose.

“Norbert,” she asked, “What detained you? You are giving too much of your leisure hours to that charming bride of yours. I began to think you had made up your mind not to come. By the way, Norbert, she will not die before the ceremony takes place.”

“I must hurry it up, my darling,” he answered.

He bent towards her and kissed her, and in the sultry stillness of the night they made a beautiful picture. She looked at him steadily; he was somewhat like the heroes of old. He was tall, dark, very noble, with a stately, aristocratic, finely shaped head, large dark blue eyes, clear cut features, clear straight brows, his lips were well shaped, well hidden by a dark silken moustache. Her sweet mocking laugh rang in the air like the echo of a silver bell.

“You must acknowledge but one love—power, and covet but one heart.” Her eyes laughed up into his, her hand touched his

own where it wandered among the roses. The sultry air of the night swept around them, only stirred by the dreamy splash of fountains and the rise and fall of her low breathing. He had no strength against her in such an hour as this, nor did he seek, or strive, or wish to have.

Rose Voilaine knew her power? In every iota! She knew that this man, who held himself above the soft foolery of passion, was entirely bent to her will—fast succumbing to her feet, to lie there bound, and powerless to free himself from bondage; letting his life drift as she chose to guide it; risking all, so long as he could look upward into her eyes, so long as her white hand would wander to his own. Knew her power! Truly she did, and used it without mercy, without scruple. If ever woman loved, Montrose could have sworn she loved him then. He bent toward her, his breath fanned her hair, his hand touched hers where it rested among the flowers, and touched the diamond circlet, that chilled him as with the chill of ice. It recalled to him that this woman was Lord Voilaine's wife. With a quick movement she turned to go inside, the jewels in her hair glancing in the starlight.

“Let us go in !—we have given time enough to the night.” Then she laughed her gay, mocking laugh, and her eyes grew brighter as she glanced at him while he held back the heavy drapery of a window for her to re-enter the drawing-rooms.

Montrose that night drank deeper than ever of the delirious draught of this woman's witchery. He loathed more than ever the man who had bought her beauty with his gold, and claimed her by right of ownership, as he claimed his racing horse—he loathed himself for having ate and slept beneath his roof, for being his guest, guest to the man he had hated with the dark hatred of the Montrose blood, which was ever stronger than their wisdom and closer than their honor. Montrose, when once aroused, was a man of darker, deeper passions than the passions of most men, and the anger of his race was working in him, beneath the cold surface of habit and breeding. That night as he stood in the silence of his own chamber he thought Lady Voilaine more beautiful than ever, and hated more fiercely the man whose name she bore.

CHAPTER V.

LEOLA'S MARRIAGE.

THE Duke of Montrose, as soon as he was informed by the lawyer that he had secured for him a wife, hastened at once to his mother's house. The old duchess was a tall stout woman, very dignified, very stiff. She listened to the recital of her son with the rigid and disdainful condescension of the lofty virtues of her race. On his side the duke did not attempt to extenuate anything that was reprehensible in his marriage calculations. These two persons, honorable by nature, but drawn by the force of circumstances into one of those slippery bargains which are sometimes concluded at London, thought of only the means of doing a thing worthily, which their ancestors would not have done at all.

The dowager did not spice the conversation with even a mute reproach—the time for remonstrance was past; the only point in question was now to secure the future of the family by preserving the name of Montrose.

When everything was arranged the duchess

entered her carriage and ordered her coachman to drive to Lydewood. The earl's footman conducted her to the drawing-room, where Lord Lyde was sitting. The earl rose when she entered and asked her to be seated.

The interview was solemn and cold. Lord Lyde could not bear any good will to those people who were speculating on the approaching death of his daughter; the dowager discussed the conditions of the marriage as a notary would have done, and when every point had been agreed upon she rose and said, in a metallic voice :

“Lord Lyde, I have the honor to ask the hand of your daughter, Lady Leola Lyde, for Duke Norbert Montrose, my son.”

“The earl replied that his daughter was honored by the choice of the duke.”

The marriage day was fixed and the earl went in search of Leola to present her to the dowager.

The poor child was frightened on being brought before this tall spectre of a woman. The duchess was pleased with her, spoke to her in a motherly way, saying to herself: “What a pity she must die.”

On her return the duchess found the duke

with his child on his knee, caressing and playing with him.

The father and son formed an amusing tableau. The little boy was large of his age, very pretty, with ringlets of dark curly hair, large black eyes, and was shy to excess. In the year he had been separated from his nurse, he had seen but few people, the dowager had sequestered herself for his sake — she made and received but very few visits, for fear of betraying the secret of the house. He called the old duchess Mama; as to Lady Voilaine, he knew her by sight; he met her sometimes on an obscure road far from the streets frequented by the crowd, where she caressed the child stealthily and with sincere affection, often exclaiming: “My poor darling, can I ever call thee mine?”

The duchess informed her son that the proposal was made and accepted.

The next morning the duchess accompanied her son to Lydewood and presented him to his new relatives. Leola fainted twice in his presence. The excitement was too much for her weak constitution. As for him, he felt ill at ease. Nevertheless, he found a few words of courtesy. He came every day without his

mother while the banns were being published. He brought her flowers, according to the established custom. These daily interviews embarrassed him and fatigued Leola. On the day of the marriage Leola's wedding dress was brought her to try on. She gently submitted to the mournful mockery. These preparations wore a funeral sadness.

The witnesses for Montrose were Sir Oswald Langton and Lord Chandos; those of Leola were Lord Hampton and Hugh Gaynor. All the nobility had been invited to the ceremony. Despite the discretion of all the parties concerned, everybody suspected something; in any case it was a rare and curious spectacle, the marriage of a dying girl. When the bride reached the church a large number of carriages had assembled.

The bride was very pale and had to be supported by her father. She advanced slowly to the altar, her father retaining her hand and walking on her left. After the ceremony a postchaise carried the travelers in the direction of Grosvenor Square. It was necessary to take the duchess and little Conrad, for Lord Lyde had decided to take his daughter to Italy.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DUKE OF MONTROSE.

"I THINK Montrose is going to monopolize her forever," said Lord Lennox, dropping his opera glasses one night at the opera in London.

"He has kept the field quite a long time," said his Grace of Thurston.

"Lady Voilaine is wonderfully faithful, and they say he is as mad after her now as when he first met her, five years ago. All London chatted itself hoarse over their liaison then; what we want to know is—when will it come to an end?"

"But the succession there is dangerous; a smile from her would cost a shot from him. Don't understand it myself, never should, but he is positively her slave," says Lennox.

"Plenty of you envy him his slavery," laughed Lord Hampton.

Those whom they discussed were Lady Voilaine and the Duke of Montrose. Their liaison had been the theme of many buzzing scandals, but the buzz had soon exhausted

itself, and their connection had become a fact generally understood and but very little disguised. His place and right had been long unchallenged, however bitterly envied. Lady Voilaine looked very pretty as she sat in her box, in her dazzling lace, with the diamonds flashing here and there, glistening like stars amidst her lustrous hair. Her coquetry of manner she could no more abandon than a diamond its sparkle; but she never aroused that deadly jealousy which lay in wait within him; and Montrose, whose love was a sheer idolatry, as in the first moment, envied every glance that fell on another.

“Look, Norbert! there is your friend!” said Lady Voilaine, lifting her opera-glass to her eyes and glancing at the opposite side of the house.

“What an indefinite description!” laughed Montrose, lifting his glasses slowly.

“There is your best friend, the one man you admire more than all the rest. He is so handsome one might discover his pretty face in a multitude. Look, it is he yonder talking with Colonel Donaldson.”

Montrose's eyes lighted with pleasure as he

recognized Harry Ray. His attachment to him was very great.

“Harry! so it is. What has he come to London for, I wonder?”

“What has he come to London for? To see me, I dare say. Lord Nowell is also acquainted with Harry. I did not suspect he was so well acquainted in London. He seems to know all the gentlemen around in the boxes. Go and tell him to come here, Norbert. He will not venture without,” she said carelessly, while she bowed to Harry, with a tip of her fan and a nod of her head for which many men in the house that night would have paid down five years of their lives. The smile died off Montrose’s face. The dangerous anger of his race glanced into his eyes.

“Pardon me if I decline the errand, Lady Voilaine,” he said coldly.

“Sir Walter, will you be so kind as to tell Lord Ray he may come and speak to us here?” Sir Walter Hutton left the box on his errand.

“How rude you were, Norbert,” said Lady Voilaine, turning to him.

“Love envies the idlest words, the slightest glance that is bestowed elsewhere, my darling,” Montrose answered.

Meanwhile in Colonel Donaldson's box Ray received his message, received it with such repugnance in his tone and on his face that Sir Walter stared at him and said :

“What! the greatest beauty of the day sends for you and you are no more grateful to her than this ?”

“I have no desire to stand well with Lady Voilaine,” said Ray, impatiently.

“You will hardly send her such a message as that ?” said Sir Walter.

Ray wavered a moment, uncertain how best to evade her summons. He knew her influence over Montrose, and resented it. He abhorred her nature and believed it wise to shun her. He had met her two years before in London, but being a reader of human nature, he soon discovered her frail, coquettish nature. He warned Montrose against her, and reminded him of the utter bondage in which she held him. They parted in coldness and anger, those two men who had been the truest of friends. Hatred is scarce too fierce a word for which Harry Ray felt for Rose Voilaine. Had there been a plausible pretext for leaving the house to avoid her, he would have taken it.

But it was impossible to evade her summons

without being rude. For the old love that he bore for Montrose, he consented to comply with her request. He turned and followed Sir Walter to her box.

“What has brought you to London? Anything special?” asked Montrose, when Lady Voilaine, having given him a smile and a few words of courtesy.

The hot words that had passed between them had been allowed to drop into oblivion by both.

“I came down to visit Colonel Donaldson; he made me promise, and I had to comply. You have met him at Greylands.”

“Yes, I remember.”

“We shall be charmed to see you at my home, Harry, whenever you are at leisure,” smiled Lady Voilaine.

He bowed and thanked her. For those few words many peers in England would have laid down half their fortune. Harry acknowledged them coldly; he could not forgive her the estrangement between him and Montrose; he could not see his friend by the side of the woman who enslaved him. He read her aright; this sorceress, who could summon at will every phase of womanhood. His reason gave out against her an uncompromising verdict.

With cold courtesy he made his adieu and left her box, as soon as it was possible to do so.

As Montrose rode away from the opera that night Lady Voilaine reproached him for his jealousy. "You are so jealous," she said, "you are fit for the old days of Venice."

"My love!" he replied; "there is cold love where there is no jealousy. Love only knows that it hates those who rob it of the simplest word, or a single smile; and my darling for the love you taught me I would barter life and sell eternity."

Yes, it was true; his slavery was sweet homage to her power, and she looked up into his eyes, as she had vowed so many times before, with her sorceress tongue and matchless lips—so she vowed him now.

"Norbert," she murmured, "we do not love the less, but the more, because the world sometimes robs us of each other."

CHAPTER VII.

THEIR TOUR IN ITALY AND AMERICA.

LORD LYDE decided to take Leola to Italy ; her mother-in-law, her newly-adopted son and Doctor Carlton were to accompany them ; so all preparations were made. After the marriage ceremony was solemnized they drove to the home of the dowager in Grosvenor Square. It was necessary to give Leola a few hours repose before starting on their journey.

Leola slept but little on the first night of her marriage. She rested in a large bed in the middle of a large chamber. She could not sleep ; she fancied she saw death standing before her, ready to grasp her. "If I sleep," thought she, "no one will wake me. They have put me here to die."

Towards morning fatigue became stronger than care, and Leola let fall her heavy eyelids. When she opened them again she felt quite refreshed.

Almost immediately she saw the old duchess enter in traveling costume, with the little Conrad running by her side.

“My daughter,” said the duchess, “I present to you your future son.”

Leola clasped the child in her arms and kissed him two or three times. She gazed at him long and steadily, and felt her heart warm towards him.

After an imperceptible effort she said, in a half audible voice: “My son!”

The dowager embraced her for these words. From that moment the mother and child were friends.

They traveled by slow journeys, halting every little distance, for fear of fatiguing Leola.

They remained in Italy for two months without effecting any change for the better. They visited Florence, Turin, Naples and Genoa, without doing her any good. The doctor thought the climate of Nice would do her much good. They remained there for three weeks, and the patient's health began to decline. She expressed a desire to visit Rome, the air of that city was not apt to do her much good. She saw Rome; its deserted streets, its spacious churches, wore in her eyes a melancholy air, and she could not endure their mournful suggestions.

The next place they stopped was Pisa. They

stopped here for two weeks, and were on the eve of returning to London.

That evening as Lord Lyde and Doctor Carlton sat down to supper at their hotel they met a young American artist, with whom they conversed. He had seen Leola enter, and had easily guessed of what disease she was dying. The painter told the doctor that he thought Leola's life could be saved. "Sir," said he. "As for me, I was as ill three years ago as this young lady that is here."

"The physicians of my own country sent me to Italy; the air of Italy done me no good. While in Europe I was under the care of the best English physicians; they all told me I could not live."

"I thought I would like to end my days in the land of my birth. So I chose St. Augustine, in the State of Florida, and installed myself there to bide my time; but I grew so well that it was indefinitely postponed."

"Were you a consumptive?" asked the doctor.

"In the last stage, if the doctors did not lie to me."

He cited the names of the physicians by whom he had been treated and given over.

Doctor Carlton asked permission to auscultate him. It was granted.

Two hours afterward Lord Lyde was seated by the bedside of his daughter. Her face was flushed and her breath panting.

“Father,” she said, “I think the end is not far distant. I will soon cease to trouble you.”

Her father took her in his arms and kissed her. “Leola,” he said, “I have just dined with a young American artist whom I will show to you to-morrow. He was worse than you, so he assures me. The climate of St. Augustine, Florida, in the States, cured him. We will start for America as soon as possible.”

Leola looked at her father and exclaimed with emotion :

“Do you speak the truth, father? Can I live? I would like to live, if it were only to baffle those who are anxious for my death.”

The very thought that she could be cured gave her strength. She was able to rise next day. Two days after they took her to Genoa and embarked for America. The trip to America was without a doubt the most trying of all to Leola. Twice during the voyage Doctor Carlton thought she must succumb to death, but she rallied each time and reached

St. Augustine more dead than alive. She was at her worst for six days after reaching her destination, but after the sixth day she began to improve. The fair weather and climate of Florida was slowly healing her. Doctor Carlton witnessed the miracle with admiration. He gazed on the work of nature and watched the action of a power superior to his own, with passionate interest. Yet to merit the aid of Providence he thought best to do a little himself. He took Leola out for long drives in the sunshine, and under his careful treatment, together with the pure air of St. Augustine and the sunshine of Heaven, Leola slowly but surely recovered. At the end of six weeks she ate, digested and slept well. The night-sweats which inundate all consumptives gradually diminished. The heart of the patient was not slow in entering into convalescence. She was very happy at feeling her life renewed, and very often thanked God for it.

Time rolled on and on. In its flight one year has passed since Leola had left London, but in that length of time a miracle had taken place.

Lord Lyde has purchased a beautiful little villa on the outskirts of St. Augustine,

shrouded in flowers, with beautiful orange trees covered with the choicest of fruit. No one would recognize Leola now that had known her in her English home. From the pale, thin, emaciated consumptive, she had been transformed into one of the most beautiful of women, when she walked under the old orange trees in the garden, her countenance no longer pale, but flushed with the roses of health. She was very beautiful—magnificently beautiful now, with her golden hair, her beautiful, white, clear skin, her large blue eyes, her perfectly rounded, graceful form. She was greatly admired. Her beauty was the gossip for miles around.

No one was better pleased with this new turn of affairs than the old duchess. No mother could have been more affectionate than her. In her letters to her son she never tired of describing Leola's wonderful beauty.

At this time little Conrad was taken ill with the fever; during the night he grew rapidly worse, and next day he was so ill that the duchess telegraphed for her son, telling him to come immediately, his child was dying.

CHAPTER VIII.

LORD HARRY RAY.

LORD HARRY RAY was master of Greyland. Tall, finely formed, with a boyish, frank, handsome face. He was beloved by all his friends and acquaintances for his straightforward manly principles and genial disposition. He was idolized by the Duke of Montrose, he was his nearest and dearest friend, his constant companion.

Greylands was situated about three miles from Montrose. The duke and Harry Ray had grown up as boys together; they had been chums at Oxford, and inseparable companions ever since. Never had one angry word passed between them until Lady Voilaine's name was spoken of. Harry had from time to time warned Norbert against her and advised him to give her up. After his son was born, and again after his marriage to Leola he again told and argued with Montrose that his place was by his wife's side until death should claim her, but his words and pleadings had no effect against the silvery tongued flattery of

Lady Voilaine. When Harry mentioned the subject to him Montrose always made some excuse to change it.

“I thought you had left London, Harry?”

“Have a cigar?” said Montrose one evening about a week after Harry Ray arrived in London, meeting him at the club. “I have not seen you since that night we met you at the opera. Why have you not called?”

“I have been ailing for a few days,” answered Harry. “What a warm night; let us take a walk.”

“By the way, old fellow, how is your wife, is her health improving any? I believe she is in America now, is she not?”

“Yes, her health is improving; so mother said in her last letter. I received it only yesterday; but you know consumptives always improve before going to die.”

“Norbert, do you still believe in the love of Lady Rose Voilaine?”

“To the full!” The answer was mild, as yet, but Montrose’s eyes were beginning to glitter coldly and angrily.

Of all things, he hated his personal feelings probed.

“What!” broke in Harry. His manner

was utterly changed from its usual nonchalance.

“What! you are as mad about her now as you were five years ago?”

Montrose laughed.

“My dear Harry, five years ago, and at different periods of time since, you were so good as to intrude your counsels on me. Pray do not trouble yourself to repeat them. I bore rather ill with your interference then. I may do so still worse now.

“Bear with it as you will! But do you mean to tell me, then, that arch coquette as Lady Voilaine is, you are infatuated enough to believe she will forever remain true to you?”

“Harry,” replied Montrose in icy tones, “even forbearance will not last ‘forever’ if it be tried too far, as you take a fancy to try it to-night. All I beg of you is, cease to meddle with my private affairs. You must have imbibed too much wine at supper this evening. It has excited you.”

The duke’s words were sneering and cold; such words, flung at a man in a moment of excitement and strong feeling, are like ice-water flung on flames of fire, and on the spur

of the moment Harry Ray said what might never have crossed his lips.

“You are a fool, Norbert!” he broke in hotly and quickly. “It is no secret now. You are the slave of her idlest caprice. You are chained and infatuated by her. All the world see it. Men jest and jeer over it!”

“Because they envy it—as perhaps you do?”

“They ridicule you behind your back,” Harry answered, not noticing the sneer. “You have no will of your own with her—she rules you as she pleases. Can you drag down the honor of your name, the name of your mother, for the sheer sake of this wanton adulteress?”

“Silence!”

The word hissed out on the air like the whiz of a bullet.

“I need not say our acquaintance ceases from to-night?”

He moved away with a low bow of contemptuous courtesy; with a sudden movement Harry stood before him.

“For God’s sake, do not let our friendship be broken for her,” muttered Harry. “Stop, Norbert! We shall not part like that. We

never had an evil word between us till she wrought them. Norbert, is all our friendship to be swept away in a single night?"

"Lady Voilaine can in no way be charged with having caused the evil words between us; you have yourself to thank for your insulting insolence to me."

"I never intended to insult you, Norbert, but I want to tell you frankly, what all your friends and enemies say with one voice behind your back, because I seek to warn you against your wretched slavery with a titled harlot. Norbert, I say she is faithless to you!"

For an instant the words struck Montrose like a shot, and as the syllables left Ray's lips Montrose lifted his arm, the jeweled handle of the little cane he carried flashed in the moonlight, the switch whirled through the air, and in the swiftness of a second had struck a broad, livid mark across Ray's brow, brutal as a death stroke, ineffaceable as shame.

"That for your lies and insults. Your life will pay the forfeit."

The words were hissed in Ray's ears as the blow fell, low but distinct as the hiss of a snake, cold, relentless as death, as he reeled back, for the moment staggered and blinded.

Montrose's eyes fastened on the swelled crimson wound where the cane had left its mark, with pitiless greed for revenge that yet clamored still for more.

Under the pale moonbeams of the warm night the vile ineffaceable insult seemed stamped on the living flesh in letters of fire, which nothing in the past or present or future could never wash out or cover, for which blood alone could atone. And Montrose laughed to himself a cold, sneering laugh ; breaking the cane in two, he threw the fragments into the face of the man he had struck, but received for his pains in return a blow on his own lips with a force that would have sent a weaker man hurling backward to the ground.

“By heavens, you must answer for this to-night.”

His face was white, save where the red wound stood out across his brow ; his voice was hoarse. The suddenness of the foul indignity seemed to have paralyzed in him all save the sheer instinct of its revenge.

“With pleasure !” said Montrose.

“Where ?”

“In the elm grove, where Lord Leigh received his death wound, if it suits you.”

“Your hour?”

“At midnight. I am engaged until then.”

“I shall await you.”

With these few rapid words all was said and done in less time than it takes to write it.

Then he turned and went his way. He only thought of the brutal insult he had given, with pitiless delight; the jealous and revengeful greed that were within him could only be sated with one requital — Life! Life!! which in a few hours would be at his mercy. Mercy—that word he knows not; it was not in his race or in his creed. As ruthlessly as he dealt out insult, he had it into him to deal out death.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DUEL.

THE pale moon was shedding its silvery light over the earth, on the winding waters, and on the green hills afar off, and down the numerous little rills close by.

As its silvery rays steal amidst the shadows of inlets and shady dells, so it steals among the shadows of Elm park in London, amidst the tall elm trees and the dark barrier of forest growth. All was quiet save the dull sounds of parting waters, where some loathsome reptiles stirred among its breaks, or the hot breeze moved its pestilential plants.

And in silence they stood facing each other. In this silence they had met, in this silence they would part.

The pale moonbeams fell upon Harry Ray's beautiful silken hair, and in his eyes as they looked up towards the clear, cloudless sky, giving him an almost supernaturally handsome appearance, and on Montrose's face the shadows deepened, leaving it as though cast in bronze, cold and tranquil, each feature set

into the merciless repose of one immovable purpose.

Their faces were strangely contrasted, for the serenity of one was that of a man who fearlessly awaits an inevitable doom, the serenity of the other that of a man who mercilessly deals out an implacable fate; and while in one you could but see the calmness of custom, beneath the suave smile of the other you could read the intent of the murderer.

Midnight was nigh at hand.

They fronted one another, those two inseparable friends, while close at hand babbled the rushing, tumbling little rills, while above their heads shone the pale splendor of the Queen of Night.

“One!”

The word fell down upon the silence. Their eyes met, and in the gaze of the one was a compassionate pardon, but in the other a relentless hate.

“Two!”

Once more the single word dropped out upon the stillness of the night.

“Three!”

The white death-signal flickered in the breeze. There was the assassin's greed within

Montrose's soul, the calmness of his face never changed, the remorseless gleam of his eyes never softened.

It was for him to fire first, and the doom written on his countenance never relaxed. He turned and fired quickly—but his shot sped home.

One moment Harry Ray stood erect, his silken hair floating in the wind—he then reeled slightly backward, raised his arm and fired in the air !

The bullet flew far and harmless among the topmost branches of the elm trees, his arm dropped, and without sign or sound he fell down upon the sodden turf, his head striking against the earth with a dull echo.

A little bullet hole over Harry Ray's heart told its own story, for the Duke of Montrose did not often miss his mark, and he who had slain him, more coldly, more pitilessly than the hardest-hearted amongst us would slay a dog, stood unmoved in the moonlight, with his calm, deadly serenity, which had no remorse, while about his lips there lingered a cold, cruel smile, and in his eyes gleamed the flame of a bloodhound's triumph.

An exultant light shone in his eyes ; he had

avenged himself and Lady Voilaine! Life was the price his revenge had set; his soul was of iron; he went nearer, stooped and gazed at the work of his own hand. Life was extinct, the eyes of his friend were closed to him forever.

And his murderer stood by, calm, unmoved, his face so serene in its brutal and unnatural tranquility; there was but one witness to his crime, a celebrated dueling physician of London, a man who had witnessed crimes quite as dark as this frequently, a man who had been tried and trusted. Almost unconsciously Doctor Lacey watched him as he moved away to the spot where his horse was waiting. With the same fatal calmness on his face he mounted his horse and rode away. The sound of the hoofs on the road grew fainter and fainter as he rode away. Montrose rode away to her whose sorceress power was alone responsible for this night's work.

CHAPTER X.

REMORSE.

STRAIGHTON—straihgt on to the home of Lady Voilaine, rode Montrose to tell her that another man's life had been sacrificed to shield her from reproach ; that Harry Ray's life had paid the forfeit. Montrose related to her with cold blooded indifference the particulars of his remorseless crime ; he told how he struck him as he would a hound that had bitten him, for the lieing words that left his lips. He could not restrain the pitiless passion that vibrated through his voice, and she understood him without translation.

“He had but one course open to him,” he replied. “A coward would have to meet me, and he was never that.”

An exultant gladness lightened in her eyes, a flush came on her cheek ; for an instant it lent to her beauty a glow soft and radiant as the morning.

“You have done right ; you have done well ; you have done but your duty, my noble Montrose,” she said as she stooped over him with

her soft glance, and wreathed her white arms about him and leaned on his her fragrant lips.

And he was happy then. Yes, he was as happy as the drunkard is in the reeling madness of his revel, in the delirious insanities of his excitation ; he was happy with this guilt at his door, with this murder on his soul. He was happy while the waving tresses of her hair swept softly against his cheek, and the false lovelight of her eyes looked back into his own.

His honor had bent like wax in her hands, and crime had no sting since it was just in her sight ; as he had been without mercy, so he was now without remorse.

The cold grave of his friend chilled him not. In the dreamy warmth of her kisses and in his heart the crime was not felt while it beat in unison with hers.

For her sake he had steeped his soul in the guilt of Cain ; and the more deeply it had doomed him the sweeter grew his love. He never gave one thought to him who had been his best friend in life ; he only looked up into her eyes and drew her lips close to his own. And while his kisses lingered on her lips as he drew her towards him, the forward movement dislodged a letter, which lay hidden amongst

the laces on her breast, so that it dropped on Montrose's arm.

He picked it up and looked at it. Lady Voilaine with a quick movement tried to snatch it away, but was unable to do so.

That was a fatal letter to Lady Voilaine. It changed her whole life. Standing under the large chandelier, its reddening rays streaming on the page, lit up each word till it seemed written in blood. Montrose read—read on to the last line.

Then a shrill, hoarse cry rang through the room, a cry of great agony, and throwing his arms above his head, he fell like a drunken man down upon the floor.

Rose Voilaine for the first time in her gay life grew pale from fright, the smile faded from her lips.

For she saw the man whom she had fooled and whom her breath, with its traitorous caresses, had wooed to the bottomless depths of crime, and knew her power over him was gone. For she saw that he knew her aright—at last. She saw that there are moments in human life which transform men to fiends, in which the slave, goaded to insanity, turns and rends his tyrant.

Montrose had arisen with a spring like a tiger, caught Lady Voilaine in his grasp, bruising the white skin which he had once deemed too fair for the summer air to breathe on, and the fear of death came on her, for she knew now her voice would have no power to quell the storm, the voice which had lured him to crime!

As the tiger seizes his prey, his arms crushed her there where she stood, his face pale with passion, his eyes bloodshot, his hair wet with the sweat of anguish.

In his agony he was mad—mad with its hideous riot surging in his brain, and now as he gazed upon her mocking, accursed loveliness, that fiend in angel guise, that had lured him on, into the abyss of infamy and stained his soul with crime.

“Oh God, I shall die! You would not kill me, Norbert?”

“Why not, if fiends can die? You have lured me to murder; you shall have a murderer’s doom.”

He held her as in a vice of iron, she could not escape, and in his maddened, cheated love, his tortures of remorse, he knew not what he done.

He only saw the contents of the letter which he had read, which told him that Lady Voilaine was false to him, for the letter was written in her own undeniable handwriting to his murdered companion, Harry Ray, begging for, imploring for his love, telling him she would renounce Montrose forever if he complied.

And turning over the letter, on the other side of the same sheet of paper, he read in the old familiar handwriting of his truest and dearest friend, the scornful refusal.

“I never would listen to you,” Harry said in the letter. “I have always detested and hated you, Lady Voilaine. Even had I loved you as madly as Montrose, my honor would never permit me to betray him.”

Montrose only saw and felt the forest brute’s fierce craving thirst for her life. And he knew she was in his power ; her slave was now her master.

Trembling with terror, she wrestled in his grasp, while her voice moaned out in a piteous cry :

“My God ! Montrose, have mercy on me for our child’s sake if not for my own.”

Closer he clinched her in his grasp, her beautiful hair tangled in his hands, her form pressed

in his hold until she cried with pain, and she thought death was nigh now—death from the hands of the man she had lured and betrayed. A sickness of mortal dread came over her, a mist blinding her eyes, a loud noise rang in her ears and beat about her brain.

He only saw the face that lured him to sin ; he only knew the brute impulse to crush out her loveliness, and she was dying—dying by his hand, without strength to summons those within call, without strength to break from him to where safety and defense were at hand.

“Death is too much mercy for you ; for the sake of our child I spare you,” Montrose cried as he threw her from him, hurling her fragile form from out his arms, and leaving her where she lay, he reeled out into the silvery moonlight, staggering like a drunken man, his brain crazed with the madness of delirium. He found his horse tied where he had left him, mounted and rode away in the direction of Grosvenor Square.

As he rode up he received a dispatch from the footman ; tearing it open, he read, “Come at once ; your son is dying.” “It is from mother,” he said.

He learned that a steamer left Liverpool the

following day, so he made all preparations for a trip to America. Two weeks from that fatal night Montrose had reached St. Augustine. But, alas! it was too late; his beloved child was dead long since. He had lived but two days after sending the despatch.

“My poor son, the news will kill you, I am afraid.” His mother it was who met him first as he entered the house and addressed these words to him. “But my dear son,” she said, “though you lost your child you have found a beautiful wife, not as you last remember her, but restored to perfect health and as beautiful as a summer dream. Come, I will bring you to her.”

CHAPTER XI.

HIS WIFE.

The old duchess led him out into the beautiful old garden, and there, standing under the beautiful orange trees, the Duke of Montrose thought he never beheld a fairer picture.

She was the fairest rose of all, loitering among the orange trees on that beautiful June day.

He looked and saw a tall, graceful form of a young girl of nineteen summers, with hair of burnished gold, drawn back from a low, white brow, and a face so inexpressibly lovely that his soul was thrilled with rapture at the very sight.

“My son, this is Leola, your wife—I see you do not recognize her. You do not know her?”

“My wife! My wife, did you say, mother? You do not mean that this is the dying girl I wedded in England, the girl I wedded at St. Paul’s one year ago?”

“Yes, my son, this is your wife.”

The duke extended his hand to her and said:

“Let me thank you, Leola, for the care you extended to my son. Mother has told me you have been a guardian angel to him.”

“I have done but my duty,” she answered.

Leola’s heart went out to him, he looked so sad.

That night after tea Leola was walking in the garden, a favorite pastime of hers, when Montrose went to her, and said :

“Leola, you do not hate me, do you? I have been a bad man, but I have suffered much for my sins. But I am a penitent now. I am going to lead a very different life. I am going to become a better man. Leola,” he said, in a calm, trembling voice, “will you listen while I tell you all I have suffered?”

Leola nodded her head.

Montrose then told her all, told her of his infatuation of Lady Voilaine, how she lured him with her false smiles and still falser heart. He told her of the quarrel and fatal duel with his best friend, and the finding of the letter, that undisputed proof of Lady Voilaine’s perfidy. He told her how, half crazed, he had nearly murdered her, and only paused when he recalled that she was mother to his child.

“I wanted to speak to you, Montrose. I

wanted to tell you that I feared that I was in the wrong, since my life separated you from your happiness."

"No, Leola;" he said. "Everything is over between us now."

"My hate for her exceeds the wildest love that I ever felt for her."

"Your life and your health are gifts from God, Leola. It is a miracle of heaven that has preserved you."

"I thank you, Norbert, and I recognize your heart in these kind words; you are too good to rebel against a miracle. But, Norbert, do you regret anything? Speak to me truthfully, without disguise."

"I regret but one thing, Leola; that of not giving you my first love."

"You are a noble man, Norbert; this woman was never worthy of your love."

"I never think of her now, I love her no longer. I have found a more worthy object on which to fasten my affections."

"I speak of you, Leola. My wife, will you let me love you? You are very dear to me. There is no room left in my heart for another."

"Will you try and return my affection, Leola? Will you try to make me happy?"

“I will try—I will do my best, Norbert!” she replied.

And so time sped along—time passed quickly amidst the orange trees and flowers of sunny Florida.

Lord Lyde and Montrose were constant companions and the greatest of friends, while the duchess fairly idolized her daughter-in-law. They all lived in a perfect harmony of pleasure.

“A year has passed, Leola; one year ago to-night since my little Conrad died,” replied the duke of Montrose. “I have waited one year, my darling, to hear from your own lips my fate. Have you tried, have you found, Leola, that you can love me a little?”

“I don’t know; you must tell me if I do. All I know, Norbert, is when you speak to me your voice rings in my ears, and I grow intoxicated as I listen to you. Whenever my hand touches yours it thrills me with a strange, delightful shudder. When you are away from me, when I can neither see nor hear you, there seems a great strange lonesome feeling about me, and I feel a loneliness which overwhelms me.”

“Now, Norbert, tell me if I love you.”

Her answer fell like dew on the heart of Montrose. He was so happy in learning that Leola loved him that he forgot for a moment all his past folly.

A new light illumined his soul ; he compared his former passion, as restless and turbid as a stormy torrent, with the calm tranquility of legitimate happiness. It is the story of all young husbands ; when one lays his head on the conjugal pillow for the first time he perceives with sweet surprise that he never slept well before.

Montrose took both Leola's hands in his and drew her closer to him and imprinted a kiss upon her lips, exclaiming :

“ Yes, Leola, my wife, you love me, and no one else ever loved me like you. You transport me into a better world, full of honorable delights and pleasures. My money may have helped to save your life, but you have repaid the debt liberally in opening my eyes to the holy light of pure love. Let us love each other, Leola, with a love that knows no end. God, who has joined us together, will rejoice to gather two more happy hearts into his bosom. Let us forget the whole world to belong to each other.”

Leola opened her arms to her husband and folded them about his neck, and her large, frank, clear blue eyes looked up to his

“Yes, Norbert, my husband, I love you ; love you truly with all my heart.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE BALL.

THERE never was a ball like it before. The ill-timed rain gave a somewhat gloomy aspect to the parade of the day, but whatever that lacked was more than made up by the brilliance of the scene in the vast court of the Pension Building.

It was estimated at the height of festivities ; there were fifteen thousand people in the hall. Even the reserve of the well-bred man of the world was astonished into an expression of amazed delight as he gazed upon the scene before him before passing out to be lost in the brilliant concourse.

The decorations of the immense hall had been arranged with the best of taste, and with perfect regard to the well proportioned spaces of the court. The majestic colonnades were treated by the decorators in a manner that did not destroy the effect of their splendid proportions, but rather heightened it. Touches of color here and there afforded delight to the height,

radiating in every direction from the centre of each of the ranges, divided off by the colonnades, were streamers of red, white and blue. The lower sections of the huge colonnades were covered with crimson plush, while evergreens were wound in a great ascending spiral around each column.

All the opportunities for decorative effect offered by the balconies were seized upon by the artists ; flags, bunting, flowers, and ornamental devices of all kinds were used in abundance, and with brilliant taste. At the west end a large portrait of President Harrison looked down upon the throng, and at the opposite end there was a companion portrait of Vice-President Morton. Far up towards the lofty ceiling were circle after circle of incandescent lights that twinkled like radiant stars and shed a full soft light over the enchanting scene below.

Then with the immense throng, the beautiful women, the sparkling jewels, the shimmer of silk, and the sheen of satin, the gold lace, and scarlet or blue, here and there, of some uniform, the fascination of the moving figures in the dance or promenade, the vast hall presented a spectacle of splendor, almost un-

rivalled even in the imaginative flights of the most enthusiastic of poets.

The Duke of Montrose proposed a trip to Washington for a few weeks during the inauguration.

Leola said she would like to go and see the beautiful American Capital.

They arrived in Washington February 25, 1889, where they registered at the Arlington Hotel. While in Washington Leola was greatly admired for her wonderful beauty. She had but one rival in that respect — the beautiful Cora Elsemere, the charming daughter of United States Senator Elsemere from Virginia. Cora and Leola became great and most intimate friends. Cora Elsemere was indeed a beautiful girl, tall, very graceful, clear cut features, with beautiful pink and olive complexion, large dark eyes. She was a typical Southern beauty, and belle for three seasons in Washington.

Senator Elsemere made Montrose promise his party would attend the ball.

The Duke of Montrose was very proud of his young wife, as she promenaded or danced among this gay throng at the Inauguration ball.

Leola was attired in a superb costume, and

she looked as fair as a young queen. Her costume consisted of a magnificent amber brocade embroidered with white flowers, gorgeous, beautiful, artistic.

How well it became her ; it was cut square, showing the white, stately, graceful neck, and the sleeves hung after the Grecian fashion, leaving the white round arms bare. The lights shining upon the dress changed with every moment ; it was as though she was enveloped in sunbeams. Every lady present envied the dress, and pronounced it to be gorgeous beyond comparison.

Leola's beautiful golden hair was studded with diamond stars, and a diamond necklace clasped her white throat—this was the duke's present. Her artistic taste had found yet further scope, for she had enhanced the beauty of her dress by the addition of white daphnes shrouded in green leaves.

Montrose looked at her in admiration—her magnificent beauty, her queenly figure, her royal grace and ease of movement, her splendid costume, all impressed him.

From every fold of her shining dress came a rich, sweet, subtle perfume ; her once pale

face had on it an unwonted flush of delicate rose-leaf color.

Montrose understood the art of dancing well, he was perfect in it ; Leola avowed it.

With him dancing was the very poetry of motion. The flowers, the lights, the sweet, soft music, the fragrance, the silvery sound of laughter, the fair faces and shining jewels of the ladies, all stirred and warmed Leola's imagination ; they brought bright and vivid fancies to her, and touched her beauty loving soul. A glow came over her fair face, the love-light into her beautiful eyes, her lips were wreathed in smiles—no one had ever seen Leola so beautiful before.

“ You enjoy this, do you not ? ” said Montrose, as he watched her beautiful face.

“ Very much ! ” she replied. “ Very much, indeed ! ”

He saw how many admiring glances followed her ; he knew all the gentlemen in the hall were envying him in his position with her ; he knew, pretty as some of the ladies were, Leola outshone them all, as the sun outshines the stars. And as he looked at her now, he knew she was queen of the *fete*—queen of the ball.

“ This is the first time you have met so many

people at a ball, is it not, Leola?" asked Cora Elsemere, coming forward leaning on her father's arm, just as she finished a waltz.

Cora looked very pretty, very grand, with her dark Spanish beauty. She was attired in an elaborate costume of white silk and white lace, trimmed with green and silver leaves—the ornaments were all of silver, both fringe and leaves—the head-dress was a green wreath with silver flowers. Nothing could be more elegant and effective.

"Yes, it is the first time!" Leola replied. "I never expected to behold such a large and beautiful assemblage."

"You Americans never half do a thing," Lord Lyde replied.

"You look like a beautiful picture, Leola!" the duchess remarked, coming up at this moment.

The old duchess was all smiles, and looked very neat. She was attired in black satin, with silver and tulle entraine.

"Norbert! Norbert!" exclaimed the old duchess greatly excited. "Is that not Lord Ray over there talking with Colonel Donaldson? I thought you said he was dead; that you ki——. Look yonder, Norbert!"

Montrose glanced in the direction indicated, rubbed his eyes, and looked again.

“Am I dreaming?” he replied, “or is this a vision?”

“It is Harry, as I live, or either his ghost!”

Yes, it was Lord Harry Ray, the bosom friend of Norbert; the man that he believed lay inanimate and cold in his grave, slain by his own hand.

Harry advanced towards him with a smile on his frank, handsome face.

“Yes, Montrose, it is I; not my ghost, but solid flesh and blood, and still your best friend.”

“It was a cruel trick I played you, but I done it all for the best. I was determined to defeat Lady Voilaine in her double game of deceit and intrigue; and you know how well I succeeded.”

“The night I fought you, Norbert, my form was enclosed in a vest of chain mail; your well-directed bullet had no effect on me. I acted my part so well that I deceived you completely. Doctor Lacey, having been let into the secret to play out his part, pronounced me dead.”

“I heard that you was in Washington, and I came here from New York city to-day. I

knew you would attend the ball ; I have been watching you since your party came in."

Montrose extended his two hands.

"Harry, my friend, my more than brother, I have wronged you most grievously, but I have suffered grievously, too."

"Harry, do you forgive me?"

"With all my heart, Montrose," he answered.

"You restore twenty years of happiness to me to-night. I will live happy and content during life, and die happy, knowing that you live."

"Leola, this is my best friend, Lord Harry Ray, just arisen from the dead."

Harry laughed.

"And this gentleman is Colonel Donaldson. Gentlemen, my wife. You are acquainted with mother and also Lord Lyde, I believe."

"Where are you stopping, Harry? You and Colonel Donaldson must come and stop with us, we are at the Arlington, registered."

"I hope you don't object ; if you do we will insist," Leola and the old duchess answered in one breath.

"By the way, Norbert, who is that pretty girl standing over there? You are acquainted

with her, I believe. I have been watching her all the evening."

"Why, that is Cora Elsemere; United States Senator Elsemere's daughter; that is her father with her, come and I will introduce you. I see she is glancing over this way."

"Miss Elsemere, allow me to introduce to you my friend, Lord Harry Ray, one of the handsomest peer of the English realm," laughed Montrose. "Also Senator Elsemere." Harry bowed.

It was love at first sight. Harry Ray thought he never beheld a more fascinating lady than Cora Elsemere.

A happier party never left the ball that night.

Senator Elsemere and Cora were let into the secret of Harry's resurrection, and Lord Harry Ray was the hero of the hour.

They remained in Washington for two months. Not a very long stay, I am sure; but long enough for Harry Ray to claim Cora Elsemere as his wife, the ceremony being performed in the beautiful little church of Coventry, and it was not necessary to ask Harry if he was happy. You had but to glance at his smiling face and bright blue eyes and observe the sunlight that rested there.

Leola's beauty excited general comment in Washington. The newspapers raved about her beauty, they styled her the "English beauty, the beautiful duchess," and acknowledged her the greatest beauty of the day.

Before sailing for England they spent a few weeks in New York city, which they admired very much.

They sailed up the beautiful Hudson River on the second day in June as far as Albany, and Lord Lyde thought it was the most beautiful scenery he had ever seen.

The party landed at Albany. The old duchess expressed a desire to see the Capitol, and was shown through it.

It was the first day of July when our party arrived at last in London after their American tour.

Harry Ray at once took his young wife to Greylands, where the sun always shines on their happy union, and here we will leave them, happy, content in the blissful smiles of wedded life.

Greylands looked picturesque and lovely with its richness of foliage and flush of flowers. The great magnolia trees were all in bloom, the air was full of their delicate, subtle perfume.

Under the limes, where the shadows of the graceful, tremulous, scented leaves fell upon the grass, the limes that were never still, but always responding to some half-hidden whisper of the wind, stood Cora Ray; and her husband was watching her in the distance, watched her as she walked among the flowers and roses, and as she stooped to pluck a beautiful carmine rose he strolled up behind her; and as he watched her as she stooped amongst the flowers he thought she was the most beautiful rose of all.

CHAPTER XIII.

LADY VOILAINE'S REPENTANCE.

ONE morning, a few weeks after his arrival in London after his American tour, Montrose received a letter addressed, "Norbert, Duke of Montrose." The superscription was in a small, delicate hand, but every character was traced with singular distinctness. He opened and read as follows :

"AUGUST 3d, 1889.

"*To Norbert, Duke of Montrose :*

"I write to you, Norbert, the last you will ever hear of me in life. I am on my death bed now ; the doctors have told me I can never recover. I suppose you have heard of my husband's death ; he fell in a duel with Lord Grey six months ago, in London ; and of my subsequent flight with his slayer to France. Lord Grey lived but two months after our flight to Paris ; he killed himself by drinking and dissipation. It was then I began to see the mad folly and ruin had been wrought through me. I thought of my son, and for his sake I vowed to change my life. I have well succeeded, Norbert ; I entered the Convent of the Holy Sisters at Marseilles. I have devoted

the last two months of my life and the whole of my immense fortune to God and his Church. The greatest comfort of my unhappy life was in learning that Lord Harry Ray was not numbered among my victims, that I had not his life to answer for, not his murder on my soul, for Doctor Lacey finding out where I was, had written and told me how Harry had tricked you.

“I wanted to write to you, Norbert, asking you to forgive me for my sins to you and the sorrow I have caused you ; and if our child survives and grows to manhood, keep secret from him the secret of his birth. I also ask of you, Norbert, sometimes when you mention my name do not speak of me too unkindly ; remember once we were friends. By the time this letter reaches you, Norbert, I will be cold in death ; my soul will have taken its flight to stand before its maker to answer for its crimes. I have given orders not to send the letter to you until I have passed away. I have been a bold, bad woman, Norbert, but I have repented before it was too late ; I have done all in my power to make peace with my maker before I pass before him to be judged. You will forgive me, Norbert, for having wronged you. You will not refuse this, my last request. And now as I write this my eyes are growing dim ; I feel the cold sweat of death on my brow. Death steals over me like a shadow, I will write you my last adieu. Yours,

“ ROSE VOILAINE.”

Montrose handed the letter to his wife, and Leola, after reading it, exclaimed: "It is very sad; you will forgive her, Norbert?"

"Yes, my darling; although she has wronged me, I forgive her with all my heart, and may her soul rest in peace."

CHAPTER XIV.

ALL IS WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

A WEEK later the Duke of Montrose took his wife to his home at Montrose Castle ; Lord Lyde and the old duchess were also to live with them. During the season they lived in London.

When they reached Montrose—for the first time since his marriage—the people flocked from miles around to see the pretty young duchess, the Duke of Montrose's young wife, to welcome her to her new home.

Autumn with its richly tinted foliage, its wonder of late blooming flowers, its warm, beautiful days and beautiful twilights, has passed. Winter, cold and sharp and piercing, had come almost unawares.

The clang of joy bells filled the air ; the flag waved from the castle towers. Every face on the Montrose estates wears a smile. The Duchess of Montrose has a little son. No king's heart was ever stirred with a more passionate joy than this which now animated the heart of the Duke of Montrose ; and though wild revelry, loud song, feasting and

mirth seem to awake at his bidding, there was also a deep gratitude to heaven for granting this gift, which he prized so greatly — a little son.

He stood on the summit of a sloping hill, and looked around him with pride and delight.

This noble domain of Montrose, how fair it was, and one day it would all go to his son. “Few have ever a fairer inheritance,” he said.

The old duchess was in ecstasies of delight, and Lord Lyde was a happy grandfather.

But happiest of all was the beautiful young duchess. There was no happier woman in England than Leola Montrose. She was rich, honored, esteemed, beloved. She had one of the kindest of husbands, who was devoted to her, and a young, beautiful, little heir.

THE END.

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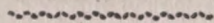
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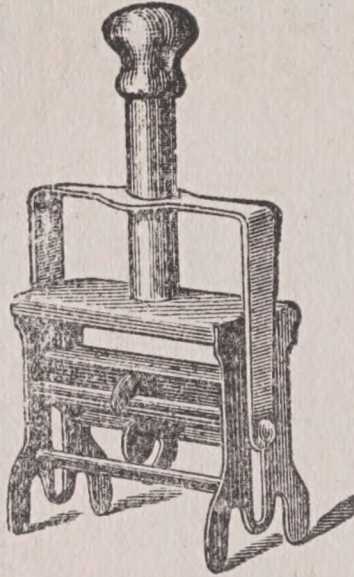
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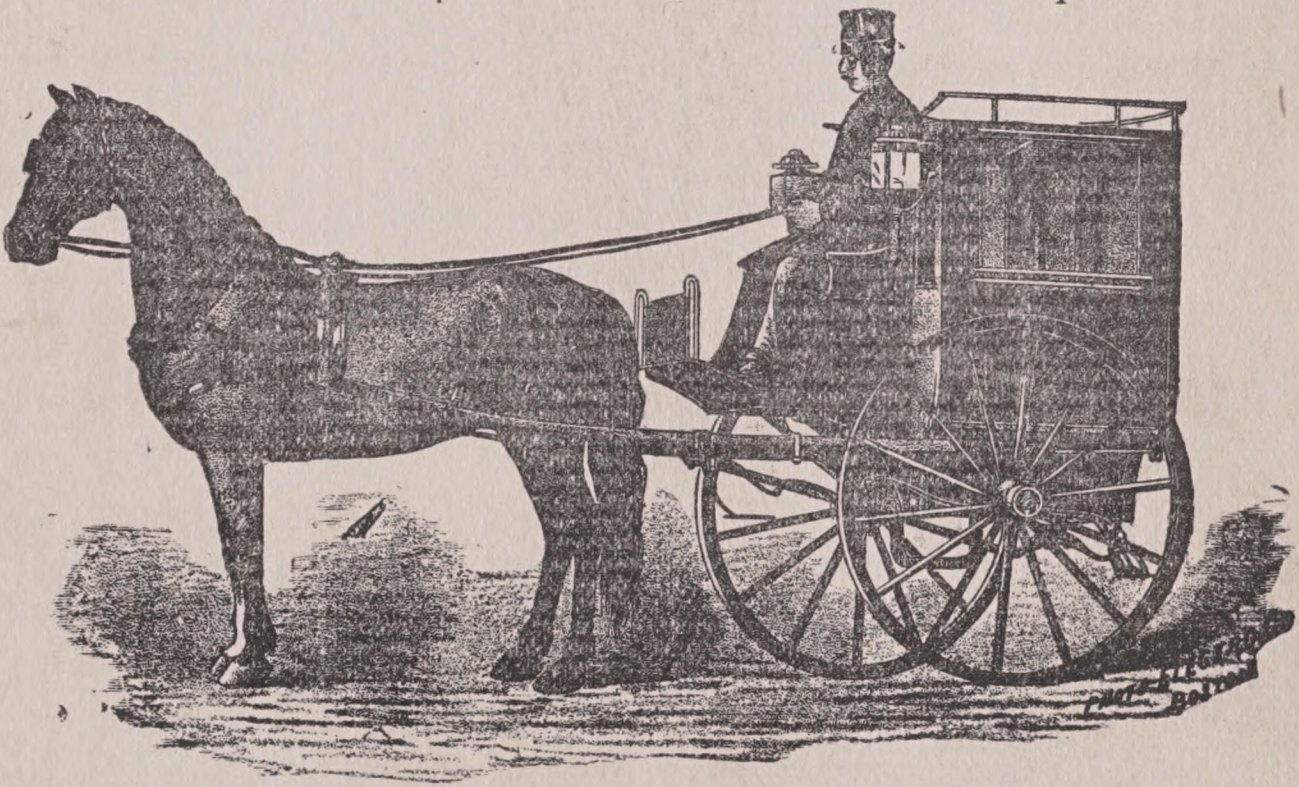
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